



## **Player Development Age Group Guidelines**

Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual *and* physical activity. Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others. In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6 year old players the same way as 13 years old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development as highlight, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups.

### **Intermediate Stage U11-U12 Development Guidelines**

During the U11-U12 age group there are going to be quite evident contrasts in all four corners of the player's development. Technically, tactically, physically and psychologically all of your players will be developing at different rates. It is now coming to the end of the players fundamental development stages where the physical development we put in will be absorbed easily, post U12 years it becomes more difficult to embed new knowledge into them.

As the players develop technically it is important that as coaches we challenge decisions in a high game spectrum practice. The highest point on the game spectrum would be playing the game itself, with the other end of the spectrum being the 'line drill' where decisions are almost made for the players. Both are a necessity as we come away from the foundation ages of soccer development and into more results and performance driven play.

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To ensure that we continue to develop as player's in-line with physical development technical maintenance is required. This can be done at the start of a session and maybe even as a challenge to players if they arrive early to practice techniques.

#### ***Ideal Conditions for Development:***

- 9v9 with goalkeeper
- 80x50 yard max field dimension
- Size 4 soccer ball

### ***Practice Structure:***

Within our practices we can use the different methods of practice design (as described in the Generic Coaching Guidelines). To allow and ensure for a flowing and progressive practice within the younger age-groups it is important that we;

- ***Avoid the use of 'line drills'***. Practice technical development with **maximum ball contact**. With all players performing desired technique within a desired practice area
- ***Be patient and demo***. Younger players especially need to have all learning needs catered for. . It is vital that we can cater for each player individual learning needs. Using tools and methods to cater for ***kinesthetic*** (performing tasks)/***auditory*** (clear and concise information)/***visual*** (demonstrations of tasks) learners.
- ***Progressive and avoiding boredom***. Players will keep engaged in a practice fully for an average of 4 minutes. Continuously add new challenges to practice.
- ***As the players now develop physically*** it is essential that a warm up and cool down are in place to reduce the chance of injury
- ***Group management*** is important to be fully effective as a coach. Players will now be starting to test and push you as coaches in group management. **Know what makes you team tick!**

### ***Practice Guidelines and Content:***

- ***Outcomes we want to achieve*** need to be set out so that we can inform the players prior to the session happening, to give clear learning objectives
- ***The structure of the session*** should be varied week to week. Try to start with a scrimmage some weeks and a group-lead structured warm-up other weeks.
- ***Creative repetition of technique*** is an excellent method to use. Players will learn from repeating technical challenges. As our practice will encourage the *creative* development of players it is really important for repetition to take place for learning to happen
- ***Guided discovery*** is similar to fact finding, but we actually provide the players with a problem to solve. This will ensure ALL players within the group are catered for and challenged.
- ***The amount of ball contact*** during the fundamental stages of development is vital. Now the amount of contact time will reduce and the emphasis will be on tactical work in game like practices.
- ***Decision making in practice*** needs to be of high priority and giving the players the opportunity to make decisions and ultimately mistakes. This is how they will learn and we can achieve this by just 'playing the game'.
- ***Multi-directional practice*** is a great tool to develop tactics through technical development. Challenge players technically by providing targets and zones to reach in different areas of the field to reach. Soccer is a game of un-limited decisions if we can challenge players to be comfortable in all directions it will be evident in their **long-term** development.
- ***Challenge every player!*** It is important to feed every players motivation to practice and you can do this by constant challenges to your players. Through individual technical challenges to the level of

competition. players may be in an overloaded situation (in or out of favor) 1v1 2v2 2v1 3v1 ect putting players in situations will increase their soccer brain capacity

- **Physical development** will affect the player’s ability to perform more challenging techniques such as longer passing. The speed in which they can perform techniques will improve as they become more accustomed to their bodies and have a sense of speed in soccer.
- **Growth spurts** in players will now start to appear. It is really important that we allow for this and that we understand it will only have a **short-term** effect on their development
- **Developing tactical** awareness through exposing the players to different games where they have a team in balance and out of balance i.e. 2v2 or a 4v2.
- **Goal setting** for players is an inspiration to practice. They need physical targets to achieve i.e. scoring a goal, number of consecutive passes.
- **Small sided game practice** is still of huge benefit. Even though the game size is 8v8 to be fully effective in the support of technical development the players still need the **maximum** opportunity to practice.
- **What motivates players** to continue practicing with soccer? This is a question that if we understand we can develop practices that will ensure the retention of soccer players within your team.

**Development Criteria of a U11-U12 player:**

Technical	Tactical
<p><b>Ball Mastery</b> – Rhythmic and patterned practice <b>maintaining</b> use of all different parts of both feet</p> <p><b>Dribbling</b> – Players will be able to move at speed with ball, deal with a 1v1 and understand why to dribble to exploit space using moves etc</p> <p><b>Turning</b> – understanding <b>why</b> to turn and using body to ‘shield’ ball</p> <p><b>Passing</b> – different distances and weights of passes and understanding of passes to <b>feet</b> or <b>space</b> and combination play</p> <p><b>Receiving</b> – Receiving the ball under pressure, from the air and the ground. Understanding <b>where</b> to take your control</p> <p><b>Shooting</b> – Shooting with power, look at introductions to volley technique and finishing from crosses</p>	<p><b>Attacking</b> –</p> <p>Players start to understand the concept of creating space as a team, individual and to exploit</p> <p>Teams will look to make good <b>angles</b> of support and <b>distances</b> of support</p> <p>Changing speed of attacks</p> <p>Players will have a better understanding of how to play in a formation</p> <p><b>Defending</b> –</p> <p>Players can work in 2’s or 3’s to regain possession. Also players will use different defending techniques such as forcing in one direction, delaying players</p> <p><b>Team Play</b> –</p> <p>Understanding the transition from attack to defense and vice versa</p> <p>Players may now start to find a ‘position’ and ‘role’ in team, teams may now develop ‘set play’ moves</p> <p>Players are now able to deal with one, two or three aspects in practice</p>

Physical	Psychological
<p>Growth spurts are prominent but some will be late developers</p> <p>Continue to <b>sustain</b> the players ABCs as the players are leaving the 'window of opportunity' to develop</p> <p>At this age boys and girls are in different stages of puberty. This can be done through juggles (coordination), dribbling (agility), passing (balance) and 1v1s (speed)</p>	<p>Players will start to problem solve in practice it is important we continue to challenge this</p> <p>The popularity of players amongst peers or the coach will effect self-esteem</p> <p>Players may be uncomfortable with their personal growth rates in comparison to others in group</p>

### Typical U11/U12 Training Session

- When designing a training sessions for this age it is important that they do not exceed approximately 90 minutes. Keeping the training sessions shorter will keep the players engaged. Here is the basic progression for a typical session:
- Warm-Up (Approx. 15 Minutes) - The warm-up should include partner and small group activities. This is also the time to introduce some dynamic stretching.
- Main Activities (Approx. 30 Minutes) - Work in small group activities. Start to work in groups of 6 to 8 players. Teaching the game in functional groups will allow players to see how the different lines (Defenders, Midfielders, Forwards) work together. Continue playing directional games to lines, targets, or zones.
- Final Game (Approx. 35 Minutes) - Every session should end with the players having the opportunity to play the game. This is why they are there! If needed, you can play bigger numbers or play with multiple fields so that all the players can participate.
- Cool Down (Approx. 10 Minutes) - Have the players involved in a low impact game to help the muscles recover. Incorporate static stretching.

Here are a few things to consider when you are designing a training session:

- Are the activities fun?
- Are the activities organized?
- Are the players involved in the activities?
- Are creativity and decision making being used?
- Are the spaces used appropriate?
- Is the coach's feedback appropriate?
- Is the coach guiding or controlling the players?
- Are there implications for the game?